

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 339

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning recent manifestations of official policy directed against the independent media in Russia and expressing concern for the continued functioning of the independent media in Russia.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 25, 2000

Mr. LANTOS (for himself, Mr. GILMAN, Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. SALMON, Mr. PITTS, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, and Mr. ROHRABACHER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning recent manifestations of official policy directed against the independent media in Russia and expressing concern for the continued functioning of the independent media in Russia.

Whereas on May 11 masked officers of the Russian Federal Security Service carrying assault weapons raided the offices of Media/Most, Russia's largest independent media group;

Whereas the raid represents a failure of recourse to normal legal mechanisms and conveys the appearance of a politically motivated attack on Russia's independent media;

Whereas the fragility of press freedom in Russia is indicated by other recent events including the relative lack of media access by opposition candidates in the March 2000 Presidential election and by the arrest and prosecution of RFE/RL journalist Andrey Babitskiy;

Whereas the Media/Most raid was carried out under the authority of President Putin and government ministers who have not criticized or repudiated the action;

Whereas Deputy Press Minister Romanchenko has publicly and unwarrantedly suggested that RFE/RL's programming is "hostile to the [Russian] State", a statement in contradiction with values endorsed by President Putin and enshrined in the Russian Constitution;

Whereas the continued functioning of an independent media is a vital attribute of Russian democracy; and

Whereas a free news media can exist only in an environment that is free of state control of the news media, that is free of any form of state censorship or official coercion of any kind, and that is protected and guaranteed by the rule of law: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That the Congress—*

3 (1) reaffirms the particular right and obligation
4 of the United States Congress to express its opposi-
5 tion to anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies
6 in countries with important relationships with the
7 United States;

8 (2) condemns the May 11 Media/Most raid by
9 the Russian Federal Security Service as a breach of

1 normal legal procedure and a deliberate political at-
2 tack on the independent media;

3 (3) expresses profound regret and dismay at the
4 detention and continued prosecution of RFE/RL
5 journalist Andrey Babitskiy and other manifesta-
6 tions of official policy directed against the inde-
7 pendent media;

8 (4) urges Members of Congress to use any
9 meetings with ministers and political leaders of the
10 Russian Federation to express concern for the con-
11 tinued functioning of the independent media in Rus-
12 sia;

13 (5) calls upon the President, the Secretary of
14 State, and other officials and agencies of the United
15 States Government to emphasize to Russian govern-
16 ment officials our concern and preoccupation that
17 official pressures against the independent media are
18 incompatible with democratic norms; and

19 (6) directs the Clerk of the House to send a
20 copy of this resolution to the Secretary of State with
21 the request that it be forwarded to the President of
22 the Russian Federation.

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